

THE CLAWS
of the TIGER

Gouverneur Morris



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Gouverneur Morris

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FOREWORD

THE Claws of the Tiger " was originally published in the May, 1910, issue of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. It created instant and unusual attention, and may fairly be regarded as the best short story of its kind ever published in an American magazine. The original publication has long been out of print, and the continued demand for copies has prompted us to reprint it in this form.

Mr. Morris has written a story of well-nigh perfect technique, and anticipated by just three years the problems of social and political evil which have lately come to such an acute climax in New York City and other large communities.

For every fallen woman there were fond parents who reverently received her into the world with visions of a fairy prince to claim her in marriage and of a future filled with honor and pride. They have looked back with bitter anguish upon the warning they neglected to give when it might have saved.

If only one parent is prompted to put up the danger signal after reading this story, its publication will not have been in vain.

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The Claws *of the* Tiger

A Story of "Organization" Methods in New York

By
Gouverneur Morris



WHAT her given name was in the old country has never reached me; but when her family had learned a little English, and had begun to affect the manners and characteristics of their more Americanized acquaintances, they called her Daisy. She was the only daughter; her age was less than that of two brothers, and she was older than three. The family consisted of these six, Mr. and Mrs. Obloski, the parents, Grandfather Pinnievitch, and Great-grandmother Brenda—a woman so old, so shrunken, so bearded, and so eager to live that her like was not to be found in the city.

Upon settling in America two chief problems seemed to confront the family; to make a living and to educate the five boys. The first problem was solved for a time by The Organization. Obloski was told by an interpreter that he would be taken care of if he and his father-in-law voted as directed and as often as is decent under a wise and paternal system of government. To Obloski, who had about as much idea what the franchise stands for as The Organization had, this seemed an agreeable arrangement. Work was found for him, at a wage. He worked with immense vigor, for the wage seemed good. Soon, however, he perceived that older Americans (of his own nationality) were laughing at him. Then he did not

work so hard; but the wage, froth of the city treasury, came to him just the same. He ceased working and pottering. Still he received pay. He ceased pottering. He joined a saloon. And he became the right-hand man of a right-hand man of a right-hand man who was a right-hand man of a very important man who was—left handed.

The two older boys were at school in a school; the three others were at school in the street. Mrs. Obloski was occupied with a seventh child, whose sex was not yet determined. Grandfather Pinnievitch was learning to smoke three cigars for five cents; and Great-grandmother Brenda sat in the sun, stroking her beard, and clinging to life. Nose and chin almost obstructed the direct passage to Mrs. Brenda's mouth. She looked as if she had gone far in an attempt to smell her own chin, and would soon succeed.

But for Daisy there was neither school, nor play in the street, nor sitting in the sun. She cooked, and she washed the dishes, and she did the mending, and she made the beds, and she slept in one of the beds with her three younger brothers. In spite the great wage so easily won, the Obloskis were very poor, for New York. All would be well when the two older boys had finished school and begun to vote. They were thirteen and fourteen, but the school records had them as fifteen and sixteen, for the interpreter had explained to their father that a man cannot vote until he is twenty-one.

Daisy was twelve, but she had room in her heart for all her family, and for a doll besides. This was of rags; and on the way from Castle Garden to the tenement she had found it, neglected, forsaken—starving, perhaps—in a gutter. In its single garment, in its woolen hair, and upon its maculate body the doll carried, perhaps, the germs of typhoid, of pneumonia, of tetanus, and of consumption; but all night it lay in the arms of its little mother, and was not permitted to harm her or hers.

The Obloskis, with the exception of Mrs. Brenda, were a handsome family—the grandfather, indeed, was an old beauty in his way, with streaming white hair and beard, and eyes that reminded you of locomotive headlights seen far off down a dark tunnel; but their good features were marred by an expression of hardness, of greed, of unsatisfied desire. And Mr. Obloski's face was beginning to bloat with drink. It was only natural that Daisy, upon whom all the work was put, should have been too busy to look hard or greedy. She had no time to brood upon life, or to think upon unattainable things. She had only time to cook, time to wash the dishes, to mend the clothes, to make the beds, and to play the mother to her little brothers and to her doll. And so, and naturally, as the skin upon her little hands thickened and grew rough and red, the expression in her great eyes became more and more luminous, translucent, and joyous.

Even to a class of people whose standards of beauty differ, perhaps from ours, she promised to be very beautiful. She was a brown-and-crimson beauty, with ocean-blue eyes and teeth dazzling white like the snow on mountains when the sun shines. And though she was only twelve, her name, underlined, was in the note-book of many an ambitious young man.

As Obloski became more useful to the great organization that owned him he received proportionately larger pay; but as he drank proportionately more, his family remained in much its usual straits. Presently Obloski fell off in utility, allowing choice newly landed men of his nationality to miss the polls. Then strange things happened. The great man (who was left-handed) spoke an order mingled with the awful names of gods. Then certain shares, underwritten by his right-hand man, clamored for promised cash. A blue pallor appeared in the cheeks of the right-hand man, and he spoke an order, so that a contract for leaving the pavement of a certain city street exactly as it

was went elsewhere. The defrauded contractor swore very bitterly, and reduced the salary of his right-hand man. This one caused a raid of police to ascend into the disorderly house of his. This one in turn punished his right-hand man; until finally the lowest of all in the scale, save only Mr. Obloski, remarked to the latter, pressing for his wage, that money was "heap scarce." And Mr. Obloski, upon opening his envelope, discovered that it contained but the half of that to which he had accustomed his appetite. Than Obloski there was none lower. Therefore, to pass on the shiver of pain that had descended to him from the throne, he worked upon his feelings with raw whiskey, then went home to his family and broke its working to bits. Daisy should go sit in an employment agency until she was employed and earning money. The youngest boy and the next youngest should sell newspapers upon the street. Mrs. Obloski should stop mourning for the baby which she had rolled into a better world three years before, and do the housework. The better to fit her for this, for she was lazy and not strong, he kicked her in the ribs until she fainted, and removed thereby any possibility of her making good the loss for which her proneness to luxurious rolling had been directly responsible.

So Daisy, who was now nearly sixteen, went to sit with other young women in a row; some were older than she, one or two younger; but no one of the others was lovely to look at or had a joyous face.

II



AFTER about an hour's waiting in an atmosphere of sour garments disguised by cheap perfumery, employment came to Daisy in the stout form of a middle-aged, showily dressed woman, decisive in speech, and rich, apparently, who desired a waitress.

"I want something cheap and green," she ex-

plained to the manager. "I form 'em then to suit myself." Her eyes, small, quick, and decided, flashed along the row of candidates, and selected Daisy without so much as one glance at the next girl beyond. "There's my article, Mrs. Goldsmith," she said.

Mrs. Goldsmith shook her head and whispered something.

The wealthy lady frowned. "Seventy-five?" she said. "That's ridiculous."

"My Gott!" exclaimed Mrs. Goldsmith. "Ain't she fresh? Loog at her. Ain't she a fresh, sweet liddle thing?"

"Well, she looks fresh enough," said the lady, "but I don't go on looks. But I'll soon find out if what you say is true. And then I'll pay you seventy-five. Meanwhile"—as Mrs. Goldsmith began to protest—"there's nothing in it—nothing in it."

"But I haf your bromice—to pay up."

The lady bowed grandly.

"You are sooch an old customer—" Thus Mrs. Goldsmith explained her weakness in yielding.

Daisy, carrying her few possessions in a newspaper bundle, walked lightly at the side of her new employer.

"My name is Mrs. Holt, Daisy," said the lady. "And I think we'll hit things off, if you always try to do just what I tell you."

Daisy was in high spirits. It was wonderful to have found work so easily and so soon. She was to receive three dollars a week. She could not understand her good fortune. Again and again Mrs. Holt's hard eyes flicked over the joyous, brightly colored young face. Less often an expression not altogether hard accompanied such surveys. For although Mrs. Holt knew that she had found a pearl among swine her feelings of elation were not altogether free from a curious and most unaccustomed tinge of regret.

"But I must get you a better dress than that,"

she said. "I want my help to look cared for, and smart. I don't mean you're not neat and clean looking; but maybe you've something newer and nicer in your bundle.

"Oh, yes," said Daisy. "I have my Sunday dress. That is almost new."

"Well," said Mrs. Holt, "I'll have a look at it. This is where I live."

She opened the front door with a latch-key; and to Daisy it seemed as if paradise had been opened—from the carved walnut rack, upon which entering angels might hang their hats and coats, to the carpet upon the stair and the curtains of purple plush that, slightly parted, disclosed glimpses of an inner and more sumptuous paradise upon the right—a grand crayon of Mrs. Holt herself, life size, upon an easel of bamboo: chairs and sofas with tremendously stuffed seats and backs and arms, a tapestry-work fire-screen—a purple poppy against a pink-and-yellow ground.

"I'll take you up to your room right off," said Mrs. Holt, "and you can show me your other dress, and I'll tell you if it's nice enough.

So up they went three flights. But it was in no garret that Daisy was to sleep. Mrs. Holt conducted her into a large, high-ceilinged, old-fashioned room. To be sure, it was ill lighted, and ill ventilated—giving on a court; but its furniture, from the marble-topped wash-stand to the great double bed, was very grand and overpowering. Daisy could only gape with wonder and delight. To call such a room her own, to earn three dollars a week—with a golden promise of more later on if she proved a good girl—it was all very much too wonderful to be true.

"Now, Daisy, let me see your Sunday dress—open the bundle on the bed there."

Daisy, obedient and swift (but blushing, for she knew that her dress would look very humble in such surroundings), untied the string and opened the parcel. But it was not the Sunday dress that

caught Mrs. Holt's eye. She spoke in the voice of one the most of whose breath has suddenly been snatched away.

"And what," she exclaimed, "for mercy sake, is *that*?"

"That," said Daisy, already in an anguish lest it be taken from her, "is my doll."

Mrs. Holt took the doll in her hands, and turned it over and back. She looked at it, her head bent for quite a long time. Then, all of a sudden, she made a curious sound in the back of her throat that sounded like a cross between a choke and a sob. Then she spoke swiftly—and like one ashamed

"You won't suit me, girly—I can see that. Wrap up those things again, and— No you musn't go back. to Goldsmith's—she's a bad woman—you wouldn't understand. Can't you go back home? No? . . . They need what you can earn. . . . Here, you go to Hauptman's employment agency and tell him I sent you. No . . . You're too blazing innocent. I'll go with you. I've got some influence. I'll see to it that he gets a job for you from some one who—who'll let you alone."

"But," said Daisy, gone quite white with disappointment, "I would have tried so hard to please you, Mrs. Holt. I—"

"You don't know what you're saying, child," exclaimed Mrs. Holt. "I—I don't need you. I've got trouble here." She touched what appeared to be an ample bosom. "One half's the real thing, and one half's just padding. I'm not long for this world, and you've cost me a pretty penny, my dear; but it's all right. I don't need *you*!"

So Mrs. Holt took Daisy to Hauptman's agency. And he, standing in fear of Mrs. Holt, found employment for her as waitress in a Polish restaurant. Here the work was cruel and hard, and the management thunderous and savage; but the dangers of the place were not machine made, and Daisy could sleep at home.

III



DAISY had not been at work in the restaurant many weeks before the proprietor perceived that business was increasing. The four tables to which Daisy attended were nearly always full, and the other waitresses were beginning to show symptoms of jealousy and nerves. More dishes were smashed; more orders went wrong; and Daisy, a smooth, quick, eager worker, was frequently delayed and thrown out of her stride, so to speak, by malicious stratagems and tricks. But Linnevitch, the proprietor, had a clear mind and an excellent knowledge of human nature. He got rid of his cash-girl, and put Daisy in her place; and this in face of the fact that Daisy had had the scantiest practice with figures and was at first dismally slow in the making of change. But Linnevitch bore with her, and encouraged her. If now and then she made too much change, he forgave her. He had only to look at the full tables to forget. For every nickel that she lost for him, she brought a new customer. And soon, too, she became at ease with money, and sure of her subtraction. Linnevitch advanced her sufficient funds to buy a neat black dress; he insisted that she wear a white turn-over collar and white cuffs. The plain severity of this costume set off the bright coloring of her face and hair to wonderful advantage. In the dingy, ill-lighted restaurant she was like that serene, golden, glowing light that Rembrandt alone has known how to place among shadows. And her temper was so sweet, and her disposition so childlike and gentle, that one by one the waitresses who hated her for her popularity and her quick success forgave her and began to like her. They discussed her a great deal among themselves, and wondered what would become of her. Something good, they prophesied; for under all the guilelessness and simplicity she was able. And

you had to look but once into those eyes to know that she was string-straight. Among the waitresses was no very potent or instructed imagination. They could not formulate the steps upon which Daisy should rise, nor name the happy height to which she should ascend. They knew that she was exceptional; no common pottery like themselves, but of that fine clay of which even porcelain is made. It was common talk among them that Linnevitch was in love with her; and, recalling what had been the event in the case of the Barnhelm girl, and of Lotta Gorski, they knew that Linnevitch sometime put pleasure ahead of business. Yet it was their common belief that the more he pined after Daisy the less she had to fear from him.

A new look had come into the man's protruding eyes. Either prosperity or Daisy, or both, had changed him for the better. The place no longer echoed with thunderous assaults upon slight faults. The words, "If you will please, Helena"; "Well, well, pick it up," fell now from his lips, or the even more reassuring and courteous, "Never mind; I say, never mind."

Meanwhile, if her position and work in the restaurant were pleasant enough, Daisy's evenings and nights at home were hard to bear. Her mother, sick, bitter, and made to work against her will, had no tolerant words for her. Grandfather Pinnievitch, deprived of even pipe-tobacco by his bibulous son-in-law, whined and complained by the hour. Old Mrs. Brenda declared that she was being starved to death, and she reviled whoever came near her. The oldest boy had left school in disgrace, together with a classmate of the opposite sex, whom he abandoned shortly at a profit. The family had turned him off at first; had then seen that he had in spite of this an air of prosperity; invited him to live at home once more, and were told that he was done with them. His first venture in the business of pandering

had been, a success; a company, always on the lookout for bright young men, offered him good pay, work intricate but interesting, and that protection without which crime would not be profitable.

Yes, in the secure shadow of The Organization's secret dark wings, there was room even for this obscure young Pole, fatherless, now, and motherless. For The Organization stands at the gates of the young Republic to welcome in the unfortunate of all nations, to find work for them, and security. Let your bent be what it will, if only you will serve the master, young immigrant, you may safely follow that bent to the uttermost dregs in which it ends. Whatever you wish to be, that you may become, provided only that your ambition is sordid, criminal, and unchaste.

Mr. Obloski was now an incorrigible drunkard. He could no longer be relied on to cast even his own vote once, should the occasion for voting arise. So the great Organization spat Obloski aside. He threatened certain reprisals and tale-bearings. He was promptly arrested for a theft which not only he had not committed, but which had never been committed at all. The Organization spared itself the expense of actually putting him in jail; but he had felt the power of the claws. He would threaten no more.

To support the family on Daisy's earnings and the younger boys' newspaper sellings, and at the same time to keep drunk from morning to night, taxed his talents to the utmost. There were times when he had to give blows instead of bread. But he did his best, and was as patient and long-suffering as possible with those who sapped his income and kept him down.

One night, in a peculiarly speculative mood, he addressed his business instincts to Daisy. "Fourteen dollars a month!" he said. "And there are girls without half your looks—right here in this city—that earn as much in a night. What good are you?"

I cannot say that Daisy was so innocent as not to gather his meaning. She sat and looked at him, a terrible pathos in her great eyes, and said nothing.

"Well," said her father, "what good are you?"

"No good," said Daisy gently.

That night she hugged her old doll to her breast and wept bitterly, but very quietly, so as not to waken her brother. The next morning, very early, she made a parcel of her belongings, and carried it with her to the restaurant. The glass door with its dingy gilt lettering was being unlocked for the day by Mr. Linnevitch. He was surprised to see her a full half-hour before opening time.

"Mr. Linnevitch," said Daisy, "things are so that I can't stay at home any more. I will send them the money, but I have to find another place to live."

"We got a little room," he said, "you can have if Mrs. Linnevitch says so. I was going to give you more pay. We give you that room instead—eh?"

Mrs. Linnevitch gave her consent. She was a dreary, weary woman of American birth. When she was alone with her husband she never upbraided him for his infidelities, or referred to them. But later, on this particular day, having a chance to speak, she said:

"I hope you ain't going to bother this one, Linne?"

He patted his wife's bony back, and shook his head. "The better as I know that girl, Minnie," he said, "the sorrier I am for what I used to be doing sometimes. You and her is going to have a square deal."

"I bin up to put her room straight," said Mrs. Linnevitch. "She's got a doll."

She delivered this for what it was worth, in an uninterested, emotionless voice.

"I tell you what she ought to have got," said her husband. "She ought to have got now a good husband, and some live dolls—eh?"

IV



NEW customers were not uncommon in the restaurant, but the young man who dropped in for noon dinner upon the following Friday was of a plumage gayer than any to which the waitresses and habitués of the place were accustomed. To Daisy, sitting at her high cashier's desk like a young queen enthroned, he seemed to have something of the nature of a prince from a far country. She watched him eat. She saw in his cuffs the glint of gold; she noted with what elegance he held his little fingers aloof from his hands. She noted the polish and cleanliness of his nails, the shortness of his recent hair-cut, the great breadth of his shoulders (they were his coat's shoulders, but she did not know this), the narrowness of his waist, the interesting pallor of his face.

Not until the restaurant was filled did anyone have the audacity to sit at the stranger's table. His elegance and refinement were as a barrier between him and all that was rude and coarse. If he glanced about the place, taking notes in his turn of this and that, it was covertly and quietly and without offense. His eyes passed across Daisy's without resting or any show of interest. Once or twice he spoke quietly to the girl who waited on him, his eyebrows slightly raised, as if he were finding fault but without anger. For the first time in her life Daisy had a sensation of jealousy; but in the pale nostalgic form, rather than the yellow corrosive.

Though the interesting stranger had been one of the earliest arrivals, he ate slowly, busied himself with important-looking papers out of his coat pockets, and was the last to go. He paid his bill, and if he looked at Daisy while she made change it was in an absent-minded, uninterested way.

She had an access of boldness. "I hope you liked your dinner," she said.

"I?" The young man came out of the clouds. "Oh, yes. Very nice." He thanked her as courteously for his change as if his receiving any at all was purely a matter for her discretion to decide, wished her good afternoon, and went out.

The waitresses were gathered about the one who had served the stranger. It seemed that he had made her a present of a dime. It was vaguely known that up-town, in more favored restaurants, a system of tipping prevailed; but in Linnevitch's this was the first instance in a long history. The stranger's stock, as they say, went up by leaps and bounds. Then, on removing the cloth from the table at which he had dined, there was discovered a heart-shaped locket that resembled gold. The girls were for opening it, and at least one ill-kept thumbnail was painfully broken over backward in the attempt. Daisy joined the group. She was authoritative for the first time in her life.

"He wouldn't like us to open it," she said.

A dispute arose; presently a clamor. Linnevitch came in. There was a silence.

Linnevitch examined the locket. "Tribble-plate," he said judicially. "Maybe there's a name and address inside." As the locket opened for his strong thumb-nail, Daisy gave out a little sound as of pain. Linnevitch stood looking into the locket, smiling.

"Only hair," he said presently, and closed the thing with a snap. "Put that in the cash-drawer," he said, "until it is called for."

Daisy turned the key on the locket, and wondered what color the hair was. The stranger, of course, had a sweetheart, and of course the hair was hers. Was it brown, chestnut, red, blond, black? Beneath each of these colors in turn she imagined a face.

Long before the first habitués had arrived for supper Daisy was at her place. All the afternoon her imagination had been so fed, and her curiosity thereby so aroused, that she was prepared, in the face of what she knew at heart was proper, to open the locket and see, at least, the color of the magic hair.

But she still hesitated, and for a long time. Finally, however, overmastered, she drew out the cash drawer a little way, and managed without taking it out to open the locket. The lock of hair which it contained was white as snow.

Daisy rested, chin on hands, looking into space. She had almost always been happy in a negative way, or, better, contented. Now she was positively happy. But she could not have explained why. She had closed the locket gently and tenderly, revering the white hairs and the filial piety that had enshrined them in gold ("triple-plated gold, at that!"). And when presently the stranger entered to recover his property Daisy felt as if she had always known him, and that there was nothing to know of him but good.

He was greatly and gravely concerned for his loss, but when Daisy, without speaking, opened the cash-drawer and handed him his property he gave her a brilliant smile of gratitude.

"One of the girls found it under your table," she said.

"Is she here now?" he asked, "But never mind; you'll thank her for me, won't you? And——" A hand that seemed wonderfully ready for financial emergencies slipped into a trousers pocket, and pulled from a great roll of various denominations a dollar bill. "Thank her and give her that," he said. Then, and thus belittling the transaction, "I have to be in this part of the city quite often on business," he said, "and I don't mind saying that I like to take my meals among honest people. You can tell the boss that I intend to patronize this place.

He turned to go; but the fact that she had been included as being one of honest people troubled Daisy.

"Excuse me," she said. He turned back. "It was wrong for me to do it," she said, blushing deeply, and looking him full in the face with her great honest eyes. "I opened your locket. And looked in."

"Did you?" said the young man. He did not seem to mind in the least. "I do, often. That lock of hair," he said, rather solemn now, and a little sad, perhaps, "was my mother's."

He now allowed his eyes to rest on Daisy's beautiful face for, perhaps, the first time.

"In a city like this," he said, "there's always temptations to do wrong, but I think having this" (he touched his breast pocket where the locket was) "helps me to do what mother would have liked me to."

He brushed the corner of one eye with the back of his hand. Perhaps there was a tear in it. Perhaps a cinder.

V



It came to be known in the restaurant that the stranger's name was Barstow; and very soon he had ceased to be a stranger. His business in that quarter of the city, whatever it may have been, was at first intermittent; he would take, perhaps, three meals in a week at Linnevitch's; latterly he often came twice in one day. Always orderly and quiet, Barstow gradually, however, established pleasant and even joking terms with the waitresses. But with Daisy he never joked. He called the other girls by their first names, as became a social superior; but Daisy was always Miss Obloski to him. With Linnevitch alone he made no headway. Linnevitch maintained a pointedly surly and repellant attitude, as if he really wished to turn away a profitable patronage. And Barstow learned to leave the proprietor severely alone.

One night, after Barstow had received his change, he remained for a few minutes talking with Daisy. "What do you find to do with yourself evenings, Miss Obloski?" he asked.

"I generally sit with Mr. and Mrs. Linnevitch and sew," she answered.

"That's not a very exciting life for a young lady. Don't you ever take a show in or go to a dance?"

She shook her head.

"Don't you like to dance?"

"I know I'd like it," she said with enthusiasm; "but I never had a chance to try."

"You haven't!" exclaimed Barstow. "What a shame! Some night, if you like, I'll take you to an academy—a nice quiet one, mostly for beginners—where they give lessons. If you'd like, I'll teach you myself."

Delight showed in Daisy's face.

"Good!" said Barstow. "It's a go. How about to-ni—" He broke off short. Linnevitch, very surly and very big, was within hearing, although his attention appeared elsewhere.

"Some time soon, then," said Barstow in a lower voice, and aloud, "Well, good night, Miss Obloski."

Her eyes were upon the glass door and the darkness beyond into which Barstow had disappeared. She was returned to earth by Linnevitch's voice close to her ear. It was gentle, and understanding.

"You like dot feller—eh?"

Daisy blushed very crimson, but her great eyes were steadfast and without guile. "I like him very much, Mr. Linnevitch."

"Not too much—eh?"

Daisy did not answer. She did not know the answer.

"Liddle girl," said Linnevitch kindly, "you don't konw noddings. What was he saying to you just now?"

"He said some evening he'd take me to an academy and learn me dancing," said Daisy.

"He said dot, did he?" said Linnevitch. "I say don't have noddings to do with them academies. You ask Mrs. Linnevitch to tell you some stories—eh?"

"But he didn't mean a regular dance-hall," said Daisy. "He said a place for beginners."

"For beginners!" said Linnevitch, with infinite sarcasm. And then with a really tender paternalism, "If I am your father. I beat you sometimes for a liddle fool—eh?"

Mrs. Linnevitch was more explicit. "I've knowed hundreds of girls that was taught to dance," she said. "First they go to the hall, and then they go to hell."

Daisy defended her favorite character. "Any man," she said, "that carries a lock of his mother's white hair with him to help keep him straight is good enough for me, I guess."

"How do you know it is not hair of some old man's beard to fool you? Or some goat—eh? How do you know it make him keep straight—eh?"

Linevitch began to mimic the quiet voice and elegant manner of Barstow: "Good morning, Miss Obloski. I have just given one dollar to a poor cribble. . . . Oh, how do you do to-day, Miss Obloski? My mouth is full of butter, but it don't seem to melt. . . . Oh, Miss Obloski, I am ready to faint with disgust. I have just seen a man drink one stein of beer. I am a temptation this evening—let me just look in dot locket and save myself."

Daisy was not amused. She was even angry with Linnevitch, but too gentle to show it. Presently she said good night, and went to bed.

"Now," said Mrs. Linnevitch, "She'll go with that young feller sure. The way you mocked him made her mad. I've got eyes in my head. Whatever she used to think, now she think's he's a live saint."

"I wonder now," said Linnevitch. A few minutes' wondering must have brought him into agreement with his wife, for presently he toiled up three flights of stairs, and knocked at Daisy's door.

"Daisy," he said.

"What is it, Mr. Linnevitch?" If her voice had not been tearful it would have been cold.

The man winced. "Mebbe that young feller is O. K.," he said. "I have come just to say that. Mebbe he is. But you just let me look him up a liddle bit—eh?"

He did not catch her answer.

"You promise me that—eh? Mrs. Linevitch and me, we want to do what is right and best. We don't want our liddle Daisy to make no mistakes."

He had no answer but the sounds that go with tears. He knew by this that his mockings and insinuations had been forgiven.

"Good night, liddle girl," he said. "Sleep tight." His own voice broke. "I be your popper—eh!" he said.

To Barstow's surprise and disappointment, when he named a time for her first lesson in dancing Daisy refused to go.

"Mrs. Linnevitch thinks I better not be going out nights, Mr. Barstow," she said. "But thank you ever so much, all the same."

"Well," said Barstow, "I'm disappointed. But that's nothing, if you're not."

Daisy blushed. "But I am," she said.

"Then," said he, "never mind what *they* say. Come on!"

Daisy shook her head. "I promised."

"Look here, Miss Obloski, what's wrong?" Let's be honest, whatever else we are. Is it because they *know* something against me, because they *think* they do, or because they *know* that they don't?"

"It's that," said Daisy. "Mr. Linnevitch don't want me to be going out with anyone he don't know about."

Barstow was obviously relieved. "Thank you," he said. "That's all square now. It isn't Mrs. Linnevitch; it's the boss. It isn't going out in general; it's going out with me!"

Then he surprised her. "The boss is absolutely right," he said. "I'm for him, and, Miss Obloski, I won't ask you to trust me until I've proved to Linnevitch that I'm a proper guardian—"

"It's only Mr. Linnevitch," said Daisy, smiling very sweetly. "It's not me. *I* trust you." Her eyes were like two serene stars.

Barstow leaned closer and spoke lower. "Miss Obloski," he said, "Daisy"—and he lingered on the name—"there's only one thing you could say that I'd rather hear."

Daisy wanted to ask what that was. But there was no natural coquetry in the girl. She did not dare.

She did not see him again for three whole days; but she fed upon his last words to her, until she was ready, and even eager, to say that other thing which alone he would rather hear than that she trusted him.

Between breakfast and dinner on the fourth day a tremendous great man, thick in the chest and stomach, wearing a frock coat and a glossy silk hat, entered the restaurant. The man's face, a miracle of close shaving, had the same descending look of heaviness as his body. But it was a strong, commanding face in spite of the pouched eyes and the drooping flesh about the jaws and chin. Daisy, busy with her bookkeeping, looked up and smiled, with her strong instinct for friendliness.

The gentleman removed his hat. Most of his head was bald. "You'll be Miss Obloski," he said. "The top o' the mornin' to you, miss. My boy has often spoken of you. I call him my boy bekase he's been like a son to me—like a son. Is Linnevitch in? Never mind, I know the way."

He opened, without knocking upon it, the door which led from the restaurant into the Linnevitch's parlor. Evidently a great man. And how beautifully and touchingly he had spoken of Barstow! Daisy returned to her addition. Two and three are six and seven are twelve and four are nineteen. Then she frowned and tried again.

The great man was a long time closeted with Linnevitch. She could hear their voices, now loud and angry, now subdued. But she could not gather what they were talking about.

At length the two emerged from the parlor—Linnevitch flushed, red, sullen, and browbeaten; the stranger grandly at ease, an unlighted cigar in his mouth. He took off his hat to Daisy, bent his brows upon her with an admiring glance, and passed out into the sunlight.

"Who was it?" said Daisy.

"That," said Linnevitch, "is Cullinan, the boss—Bull Cullinan. Once he was a policeman, and now he is a millionaire."

There was a curious mixture of contempt, of fear, and of adulation in Linnevitch's voice.

"He is come here," he said, "to tell me about that young feller,"

"Oh!" exclaimed Daisy. "Mr. Barstow?"

Linnevitch did not meet her eye. "I am wrong," he said, "and that young feller is O. K."

When Daisy came back from her first dancing lesson, Mr. and Mrs. Linnevitch were sitting up for her. Her gaiety and high spirits seemed to move the couple, especially Linnevitch, deeply. He insisted that she eat some crackers and drink a glass of milk. He was wonderfully gentle, almost tender in his manner; but whenever she looked at him he looked away.

VI



It was as if heaven had opened before Daisy. The blood in her veins moved to the rythm of dance music; her vision was being fed upon color and light. And, for she was still a child, she was taken great wonders to behold: dogs that rode upon bicycles, men who played upon fifty instruments, clowns that caused whole theatres to roar with laughter, ladies that dove from dizzy heights, bears that drank beer, Apollos that seemed to have been born turning wonderful somersaults. And always at her side was her man, her well-beloved, to explain and to protect. He was careful of her, careful as a man is careful who carries a glass of water filled to overflowing without losing a drop. And if little by little he explained what he called "life" to her, it was with delicacy, with gravity—even, as it seemed, with sorrow.

His kisses filled her at first with a wonderful tenderness; at last with desire, so that her eyes narrowed and she breathed quickly. At this point in their relations Barstow put off his pleading, cajoling manner, and began, little by little, to play the master. In the matter of dress and deportment he issued

orders now instead of suggestions; and she only worshipped him the more.

When he knew, in his heart that she could refuse him nothing he proposed marriage. Or rather, he issued a mandate. He had led her to a seat, after a romping dance. She was highly flushed with the exercise and the contact, a little in disarray, breathing fast, a wonderful look of exaltation and promise in her face. He was white, as always, methodic and cool—the man who arranges, who makes light of difficulties, who gives orders; the man who has money in his pocket.

“Kid,” he whispered, “when the restaurant closes to-morrow night I am going to take you to see a friend of mine—an alderman.”

She smiled brightly, her lips parted in expectation. She knew by experience that he would presently tell her why.

“You’re to quit Linnevitch for good,” he said. “So have your things ready.”

Although the place was so crowded that whirling couples occasionally bumped into their knees or stumbled over their feet, Barstow took her hand with the naive and easy manner of those East-Siders whom he affected to despise.

“You didn’t guess we were going to be married so soon, did you?” he said.

She pressed his hand. Her eyes were round with wonder.

“At first,” he went on, “we’ll look about before we go to housekeeping. I’ve taken nice rooms for us—a parlor and bedroom suite. Then we can take our time looking until we find just the right house-keeping flat.

“Oh,” she said, “are you sure you want me?”

He teased her. He said, “Oh, I don’t know” and “I wouldn’t wonder,” and pursed up his lips in scorn; but at the same time he regarded her out of the corners of rougish eyes. “Say, Kid,” he said presently—and his gravity betokened the importance of the matter—“Cullinan’s dead for it. He’s going

to be a witness, and afterward he's going to blow us to supper—just us two. How's that?"

"Oh," she exclaimed, "that's fine!"

The next morning Daisy told Mr. and Mrs. Linnevitch that she was to be married as soon as the restaurant closed. But they had schooled themselves by now to expect this event, and said very little. Linnevitch, however, was very quiet all day. Every now and then an expression little short of murderous came into his face, to be followed by a vacant, dazed look, and this in turn by sudden uncontrollable starts of horror. At these times he might have stood for "Judas beginning to realize what he has done."

Barstow, carrying Daisy's parcel, went out first. He was always tactful. Daisy flung herself into Mrs. Linnevitch's arms. The undemonstrative woman shed tears and kissed her. Linnevitch could not speak. And when Daisy had gone at last, the couple stood and looked at the floor between them. So I have seen a father and mother stand and look into the coffin of their only child.

If the reader's suspicions have been aroused, let me set them at rest. The marriage was genuine. It was performed in good faith by a genuine alderman. The groom and the great Mr. Cullinan even went so far as to disport genuine and generous white boutonnieres. Daisy cried a little; the words that she had to say seemed so wonderful to her, a new revelation, as it were, of the kingdom and glory of love. But when she was promising to cleave to Barstow in sickness and peril till death parted them, her heart beat with a great, valiant fierceness. So the heart of the female tiger beats in tenderness for her young.

Barstow was excited and nervous, as became a groom. Even the great Mr. Cullinan shook a little under the paternal jocoseness with which he came forward to kiss the bride.

There was a supper waiting in the parlor of the rooms which Barstow had hired; cold meats, salad, fruit, and a bottle of champagne. While the gentlemen divested themselves of their hats and overcoats

Daisy carried her parcel into the bedroom and opened it on the bureau. Then she took off her hat and tidied her hair. She hardly recognized the face that looked out of the mirror. She had never, before that moment, realized that she was beautiful, that she had something to give the man she loved that was worth giving. Her eyes fell upon her old doll, the companion of so many years. She laughed a happy little laugh. She had grown up. The doll was only a doll now. But she kissed it, because she loved it still. And she put it carefully away in a drawer, lest the sight of a childishness offend the lord and master.

As she passed the great double bed, with its two snow-white pillows, her knees weakened. It was like a hint to perform a neglected duty. She knelt, and prayed God to let her make Barstow happy forever and ever. Then, beautiful and abased, she joined the gentlemen.

As she seated herself with dignity, as became a good housewife presiding at her own table, the two gentlemen lifted their glasses of champagne. There was a full glass beside Daisy's plate. Her fingers closed lightly about the stem; but she looked to Barstow for orders. "Ought I?" she said.

"Sure," said he, "a little champagne—won't hurt you."

No, Daisy; only what was in the champagne. She had her little moment of exhilaration, of self-delighting ease and vivacity—then dizziness, then awful nausea, and awful fear, and oblivion.

The great Mr. Cullinan—Bull Cullinan—caught her as she was falling. He regarded the bridegroom with eyes in which there was no expression whatever.

"Get out!" he said.

And then he was alone with her, and safe, in the dark shadow of the wings.

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